

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and following remarks, reconsideration and further examination are requested.

Initially, the courtesies extended by Examiner Fuller during the personal interview conducted on March 1, 2004, are greatly appreciated.

During the interview, Examiner Fuller explained why neither the 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, rejection nor the 35 U.S.C. § 102(f) rejection would be withdrawn.

Examiner Fuller did express, however, that the rejections of record could be overcome by amending claim 7 to delete therefrom the phrase "irrespective of said color", while at the same time reciting in this claim that two paints having different colors which are based upon the same pigments are collected as an excess paint.

Accordingly, by the current Amendment claim 7 has been amended to delete therefrom the phrase "irrespective of said color", and has also been amended to require that paints of different colors which are based upon the same combination of pigments are collected together as excess paint. Support for the amendment to claim 7 is believed to find support in paragraphs [0028]-[0030] on pages 9-10 of the original specification, as well as the initial sentence in paragraph [0035] on page 11 of the original specification, for example.

The remaining claims have been amended, where necessary, for consistency with regard to amended claim 7. And, claim 20 has been cancelled.

Because neither the admitted prior art as depicted in Figure 2, Spangler nor Hayahara et al. disclose or suggest collecting together as excess paint two paints having different colors that are based upon the same combination of pigments, it is respectfully submitted that claim 7 is allowable over any of the prior art relied upon by the Examiner, either taken alone or in combination.

Thus, claims 7-19, 21 and 22 are allowable.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

If after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner believes that any issues remain which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicant's undersigned representative by telephone to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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